

July 6, 2012

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Comment Period for Status Review of the Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake Stays Open

On May 9, 2012, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced a 90-day finding on a petition to list the eastern diamondback rattlesnake as threatened and designate critical habitat for the species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), opening a 60-day comment period. The 60-days expires on July 9th, however, the Service will continue to accept comments and information.

This finding stems from a petition submitted last summer by the Center for Biological Diversity, the Coastal Plains Institute Inc., Protecting all Living Species, and One More Generation. The decision, known as a 90-day finding finds that the petition presents substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that listing the eastern diamondback rattlesnake may be warranted. The Service will undertake a more comprehensive review of the snake's status throughout the species' range to determine whether listing is warranted under the ESA.

The Service is asking for information from state and federal natural resource agencies and all interested parties regarding the eastern diamondback rattlesnake and its habitat. Based on the status review, the Service will make one of three possible determinations:

- Listing is not warranted, in which case no further action will be taken.
- Listing as threatened or endangered is warranted. In this case, the Service will publish a proposal to list, solicit independent scientific peer review of the proposal, seek input from the public, and consider the input before a final decision about listing the species is made. In general, there is a one-year period between the time a species is proposed for listing and the final decision.
- Listing is warranted but precluded by other, higher priority activities. This means the species is added to the federal list of candidate species, and the proposal to list is deferred while the Service works on listing proposals for other species that are at greater risk. A warranted but precluded finding requires subsequent annual reviews of the finding until such time as either a listing proposal is published, or a not warranted finding is made based on new information.

Please note that submissions merely stating support for, or opposition to, the action under consideration without providing supporting information, although noted, will not be considered in making a determination. The ESA says that determinations as to whether any species is threatened or endangered must be made "solely on the basis of the best scientific and commercial data available."

Information may be submitted by one of the following methods:

Thru July 9, 2012:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments to Docket No. [FWS–R4–ES–2012–0006].
- U.S. mail or hand-delivery: Public Comments Processing, Attn: Docket No. [FWS–R4–ES–2012–0006]; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042-PDM; Arlington, VA 22203.

Post July 9, 2012

- U.S. mail, hand-delivery, or fax: Don Imm, Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Panama City, FL, Ecological Services Field Office, 1601 Balboa Avenue, Panama City, FL 32405; telephone 850–769–0552
- Facsimile: 850–763–2177
- Email: FW4ESFRPanamaCity@fws.gov

The Service will post all information/comments on <http://www.regulations.gov>. This generally means the agency will post any personal information provided through the process. The Service is able to accept email or fax information after July 9, 2012, please submit to the Panama City Field Office as provided above.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with the Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfwssoutheast, watch the YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from the Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwssoutheast>.

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